

18
a portion of the spool forming part of the gear assembly.

3. (Amended) A vehicle occupant safety system for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle seat during a crash condition, the system comprising:

19
at least one sensor for sensing a vehicle crash condition and generating a signal indicative of the crash condition;

seat belt webbing for extending around the vehicle occupant; and

a pretensioner responsive to the signal generated by the sensor for acting on the seat belt webbing to pull an occupant of the vehicle seat who is forward in the vehicle seat backward toward a back portion of the vehicle seat,

the pretensioner comprising a seat belt retractor, the seat belt retractor including a spool on which the seat belt webbing is wound and an electric motor for rotating the spool in a belt retraction direction to pull the occupant backward toward the back portion of the vehicle seat,

the electric motor being drivingly connected to the spool by a non-backdrivable gear assembly;

the non-backdrivable gear assembly further being a locking mechanism that prevents rotation of the spool when the electric motor is not energized.

14. (Amended) The system of Claim 10 further including:

an inertial yaw stability, an extreme vehicle speed, or a proximity sensor for determining if a crash condition is impending and generating a signal indicative of the impending condition,

the electric motor further including a third mode of operation, the electric motor operating in the third mode of operation upon receiving the signal indicative of the impending condition, the third mode of operation causing the electric motor to actuate the pretensioner to rotate the spool in the belt retraction direction to pull the occupant backward toward the back portion of the vehicle seat, the third mode of operation resulting in a force on the seat belt webbing that is less than a force generated in the second mode of operation.

15. (Amended) A vehicle occupant safety system for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle seat during a crash condition, the system comprising:

at least one sensor for sensing a vehicle crash condition and generating a signal indicative of the crash condition;

seat belt webbing for extending around the vehicle occupant;

a pretensioner responsive to the signal generated by the sensor for acting on the seat belt webbing to pull an occupant of the vehicle seat who is forward in the vehicle seat backward toward a back portion of the vehicle seat; and

911
a gear assembly for transmitting power from an electric motor to a spool on which the seat belt webbing is wound, rotation of the electric motor causing wobbling of a part of the gear assembly, wobbling of the part of the gear assembly causing rotation of the spool in a belt retraction direction.

Please add new claim 16, as follows:

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16. A vehicle occupant safety system for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle seat during a crash condition, the system comprising:

2
a first sensor for sensing a vehicle crash condition and generating a first signal indicative of the crash condition;

a second sensor for sensing a vehicle impending crash condition and generating a second signal indicative of the pre-crash condition;

seat belt webbing for extending around the vehicle occupant; and

a pretensioner responsive to the first signal and the second signal for acting on the seat belt webbing to pull an occupant of the vehicle seat who is forward in the vehicle seat backward toward a back portion of the vehicle seat,

the pretensioner comprising a seat belt retractor, the seat belt retractor including a spool on which the seat belt webbing is wound and an electric motor for rotating the spool in a belt retraction direction to pull the occupant backward toward the back portion of the vehicle seat,

the electric motor having a first mode of operation,
a second mode of operation, and a third mode of operation,

the first mode of operation occurring in an absence
of the first signal from the first sensor or the second signal
from the second sensor, in the first mode of operation the
electric motor rotates the spool in the belt retraction
direction and in a belt withdrawal direction, opposite the
belt retraction direction;

the second mode of operation occurring upon receipt
of the first signal from the first sensor, in the second mode
of operation the electric motor rotates the spool in the belt
retraction direction initiating a first force to pull the
occupant backward toward the back portion of the vehicle seat,

the third mode of operation occurring upon receipt
of the second signal from the second sensor, in the third mode
of operation the electric motor rotates the spool in the belt
retraction direction thereby initiating a second force to pull
the occupant backward toward the back portion of the vehicle
seat, the second force being greater than the first force.